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Names.

AMONG those who maintain the strict personal Unity of God, there are many varieties of designation. The terms Unitarian, Liberal Christian, Socinian, Arian, Humanitarian, Christian, Bible-Christian, Hicksite, Congregationalist and Independent, have been applied either to distinct portions, or to the general mass of those who reject the doctrine of the Trinity. It may be regarded as a matter of little importance that there should be these varieties of name; and could we be so confident in our own wisdom as to be certain that mere words would never assume among us a consequence which does not belong to them, we need trouble ourselves little about the matter. This confidence however we cannot have, when we contemplate the history of opinions in past times, or when we look at the present condition of the Christian world. When names have long been worn, they are valued, they are fought for, and even when differences of opinion have ceased to exist, differences of name will produce or keep alive a spirit of dissension. The remarks which follow may show, that it is possible other evils, still more serious, may result from the adoption, on our part, of a wrong name, or even the application of the right name in a wrong manner.

We may briefly dismiss from consideration the name *Socinian*. If it was ever the proper designation of a party, it is so no longer, since the distinguishing doctrine of Socinus, —the duty of praying to Christ,—has not been maintained

among modern defenders of the divine personal unity. We have other strong reasons against this designation. It is borrowed from a human leader, and therefore not suitable for any who remember the precept of Christ to call no man master upon earth. It tends besides to give the impression that our distinguishing tenet was never maintained till the days of Socinus; an impresssion utterly incorrect, as every opponent must allow, who has ever heard of Arius and the council of Nice. And lastly, the very attempt to force this name upon us, as a term of obloquy, was a sufficient reason for the resistance made on the part of our predecessors to its imposition.

The term *Liberal Christian* has been adopted by many, and among them by some of the most respected of our brethren. There are others, however, to whose views this designation could never be reconciled. To them it sometimes grates harshly on the ear, as too assuming; at other times it seems too near akin to the unenviable titles of Rationalist, Latitudinarian, and Free-thinker. In what sense do we call ourselves liberal? The meaning of "munificent" is of course excluded. Do we then, by this term claim to be charitable in our judgment of others? If we are so, it is well; but would it not be desirable that the world should discover the fact for themselves, without our announcing it? The meaning intended must be, that our sentiments are such as correspond with, and spring from, elevated and enlarged views of God and his creation. We undoubtedly think that this is the case;—unhappily our opponents are of a different opinion. Why then should we adopt a name, our right to which can never be admitted by any except our own party? Those who differ from us sometimes call themselves evangelical; and no doubt they are as firmly persuaded that such is the character of their doctrines, as we are that our sentiments are liberal. Is not the adoption of such titles on either side, in bad taste, to say the least?

It appears that the only appropriate application of the term *liberal*, would be to that great section of the church, whose aim is to investigate and improve; a party which, excluding the Catholics and the high Calvinists, would embrace most other denominations of the Christian world.

If the term *Liberal Christian* be objectionable, as the name of a sect, because it claims too much, the term *Christian*, if assumed without explanation, would be still more so. This designation has been adopted by thousands of our breth-

ren, from an unwillingness to take any party name. They did not mean to imply that others were not equally entitled to the name of Christians,—nor did they mean to have the first syllable of the word, when applied to them, drawn out long, or the *i* of the second syllable changed into a *y* (Chrīst-yans.) All they meant was to disclaim sectarian names, and own no master but Christ. Their amiable wish has not however been crowned with success. Their name has been made a sectarian one in spite of themselves,—is barbarously pronounced, and barbarously spelt,—and, worst of all, exposes them to the undeserved imputation of arrogance and exclusiveness, unless every time they pronounce it to a stranger, it is accompanied with a long explanation, not perhaps intelligible to all.

To obviate some of these inconveniences, the term *Bible Christian* is occasionally applied to the "Christian Connexion," by themselves and others, at least in the Southern States. But this title is, in another point of view, still more objectionable than those already mentioned, as even those who assume it must admit that their Trinitarian neighbours are not deficient in respect for the Bible.

We are not aware whether the name *Hicksite* is recognised by that respectable portion of the Society of Friends, to whom it is applied by others. Such a designation would be unfortunate, as derived from the name of a human leader, and as not in itself characteristic of the faith of those to whom it is applied.

The name *Humanitarian* appears to be unobjectionable as a designation of that particular class among us, who do not believe in the preëxistence of our Saviour. The term *Arian*, as applied to those who admit the preëxistence, might be excepted against, as derived from a human leader, some of whose views, besides, have no supporters at the present day. Still the name is an old and a highly respectable one,—nor has any yet been found on the whole preferable, for the sole purpose to which this should now be applied,—that of designating a branch among the believers in the personal unity of God.

But for those believers at large, no name seems so suitable on every account, as *Unitarian*. It expresses distinctly the one great principle which we all maintain, and it expresses nothing more. It presents no claims which any candid opponent need hesitate a moment to admit. Here, perhaps, we may be met with the objection which has been often ex-

pressed, that other Christians are Unitarians as well as we, because they too believe in the unity of God. It cannot be doubted that they who make this objection are sincere. They suppose that we use the word *Unitarian* as synonymous with *Monotheist*, thus styling ourselves, believers in one God, and of course implying that our opponents believe in more Gods than one. A few words will suffice to set this matter in its true light.

"Unitarian," we have heard it said, "means, a believer in one God. Those consequently who assume this title, charge upon others a faith in more Gods than one. They thus arrogate for themselves a name which belongs equally to all Christians, and in such a manner as to accuse Orthodox believers of polytheism." This view of the subject was expressed, though not in these very words, in a dedication sermon preached about four years since, by a highly esteemed Episcopalian clergyman of Boston, now no more. We disclaim, however, the meaning thus charged upon us. We believe, indeed, that our brethren who differ from us, hold sentiments not properly reconcilable with the unity of God; but to say, or imply that they believe in more Gods than one, would be as inconsistent with fact, as with Christian charity. Though they deny the unity of person, they admit and strongly maintain a unity of being in the Supreme. The moment we can convince them that other parts of their system are inconsistent with this unity of being, that moment they are converted to our side;—if not, the ground of controversy would then be changed, and we should argue against them as indeed, blinded polytheists. In such a light, no candid Unitarian can now regard them, for they, as well as we, maintain that God is One.

Nor does the name we assume imply so grave a charge against our brethren. We deny the first assertion quoted above. Unitarian does not mean "a believer in one God," —certainly not unless Trinitarian means "a believer in three Gods." That such is not the signification of either term is evident from the fact that our opponents bear willingly the name of Trinitarian. The two words are precisely analogous in their derivation; nor does any name or title of the Supreme Being enter into the composition of either. As used among Christians, the word Trinitarian must indeed designate a believer in three, and the word Unitarian, a believer in one; but the well known state of the controversy between us shows clearly enough to what these numbers refer. There is no ques-

tion between us as to the unity of being in the Supreme, but while other Christians maintain that the one God exists in three persons, hypostases, or distinctions, we hold that no such division has place in his nature. The subject at issue being thus stated, it is obvious that Trinitarian properly expresses the belief of our opponents in the existence of three persons in one God, while the corresponding term, as used by us, denotes a believer in One Divine Person only.

The name Unitarian then, marks our distinctive doctrine,—marks no more than this,—and this in a manner which cannot give to any one reasonable ground of offence. It is then the proper and correct designation of our doctrines, and of us as their supporters.

But it may still be doubted whether this be the most proper designation for our congregations or our churches. Few practical objections perhaps exist against it at present, but when we regard the future, when we remember the spirit of comprehensive liberality on which it is desirable that all our institutions should be established, we may see reason to wish that the time might come when sectarian distinctions would no longer be applied to communities of believers, but employed simply to designate the forms and grades of belief among individuals. How this object is attainable, in the present age, may perhaps be doubted, and each religious society must decide as to the propriety of contributing by its example to promote that object. We are however persuaded that if ever unity of feeling is to be restored among Christians, it must be in part by the adoption of the principle which we now proceed to illustrate.

That principle is, that names expressive of sectarian distinctions, should be applied to individuals merely, and to such associations of individuals as are wholly voluntary, but not to our churches and congregations. We may exemplify the idea by pointing to those places of worship in the erection of which several denominations have united, as the mariners' churches in our sea-port towns, and some houses of prayer in thinly-settled districts of country. Such a church is called by no sectarian name. Within its walls the Baptist, the Methodist, the Presbyterian are equally at home. Yet the individuals who attend worship there do not give up their differences of opinion, nor do they, as individuals, refuse to be called by those names which properly designate their belief; but in the house of God they meet on common ground, and the worship that ascends from thence to heaven, is the worship not of a sect distinguished by the badge of a name from other sects, but of Christians, disciples of Jesus Christ.

Is it considered a matter of impossibility that this union of spirit and worship should exist among those whose opinions differ? The institutions which the wise and pious settlers of New England established, and under whose fostering influences religion attained that form which we regard as its truest and purest, furnish an answer in the negative. The name they gave to their churches was *congregational;* a name which marks, not the sentiments of those who preach or those who hear, but the simple fact that each congregation has entire control of its own affairs. The creeds, or terms of membership of some among those churches, show that the liberality of their founders was consistent; expressing only the plainest, most generally admitted principles of Christian truth. In a church thus constituted, the follower of all the deep speculations of Calvin sat side by side with the disciple of the milder Arminius. Had a Christian entered, who reverenced the authority of either the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Patriarch of Constantinople, or the Pope of Rome, without wishing to impose that authority on others, he would have nothing in the creed of the church to which he could refuse his assent, nothing in its name of Congregational, but an announcement of the fact that the worshipping assembly enacted and enforced for itself its own simple regulations.

In churches thus constituted, liberal feelings naturally prevailed; and as full freedom was given to religious inquiry, enlarged views were taken of providence and of revelation. Thus it was that Unitarian principles gained ground first in New England. But what then was the conduct of the fathers of our faith? Did they give up the congregational name, and narrow the creeds of their churches, so as to exclude all who held Trinitarian or Calvinistic sentiments? No. Far from it. They feared not, and scrupled not, to be called as individuals, by the name which properly expressed their sentiments, the name of Unitarians; they scrupled not to combine, as Unitarians, for the diffusion of the sentiments they held. But they changed not the liberal institutions of their churches, leaving the coming generation unembarrased with a sectarian name, and thus preserving in a great degree, the peace of their congregations, amid the storm of controversy with which they were assailed.

Would that the same liberal course were pursued in all our rising churches! It would secure the right of our brethren, now and always, to form their own opinions, and to correct them as they might see cause; it would give to following genera-

tions liberty of choice between conflicting sentiments ; it would give them liberty to be Christians if they desired it, without pledging themselves to the formulas of any sect. One of the strongest obstacles which a young person has to encounter, in publicly acknowledging the obligations of religion, is the fact that such an acknowledgment must identify him with the supporters of some creed, in such a manner as to preclude or render unpleasant, subsequent changes of opinion. Had churches never taken any other name than Christian, this difficulty would not have existed ; for then, whatever in any case might be the sentiments of the pastor, or of the congregation in general, and however boldly on proper occasions they might be expressed, no communicant would regard himself as fettered by those sentiments, or in the smallest degree accountable for them. But let your terms of communion be the most liberal conceivable, yet if the church is distinguished by a title derived from the opinions of a sect, to the opinions of that sect every one who unites with such a church will be considered as bound.

While then, we retain as individuals the name Unitarian, which properly marks our sentiments, let our congregations, and our places of worship be designated as Congregational or Independent, or, better still, bear simply the name of Christian. And in desiring that such might be universally the case, we are influenced by views of the future perhaps far distant. Believing that our sentiments are correct, we believe they will triumph. We believe that Unitarians will at length outnumber all other sects of Christians in our lands. And so much does history show of the danger of prosperity to the purity and Christian spirit of religious denominations, that we fear for ourselves, when that ascendancy shall have been attained. Let us not then have our places of public worship identified with the sects which occupy them. Let our congregations be left unfettered, even by a name. Let them be so constituted that, even where Unitarian sentiments are now most constantly preached, the next generation may, if they see fit, return to Trinitarianism without finding a single external obstacle to oppose the change. As long as the name Unitarian is spoken against, and the sentiments it represents are misunderstood and controverted, let those who maintain those sentiments bear the name, steadfastly, unyieldingly, and without a thought of retreat or of compromise ; but when its hour of triumph comes,—and come it will,—then let not that name be dishonoured as the battle-cry of a mere worldly contest for political power, or the

spell of intolerance and bigotry. No. Then let the name be heard no more, as the designation of a place of worship, or of an organized sect. Then let the powerful majority, by dropping the use of its past appellation, amalgamate with itself in feeling those who yet remain divided from it in opinion, and no name but that of Christian be known in the temples raised to the honour of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

S. G. Bulfinch.

Means of Providing the Cure and Preventing the Spread of Infidelity.

[Concluded from page 421.]

We proceed to our last topic and inquire, 1. What means for preventing the spread of Infidelity are suggested by a consideration of the personal power of the Christian. We speak here of the direct influence exerted by the mind of the Christian over the mind of the Infidel. In the exertion of that influence in what light shall the Infidel be regarded? As Philanthropists we are to engage in a work of love, as Philanthropists we are to look upon the Infidel in the light not so much of a guilty as of an unfortunate being. *All* moral evil, so far as we are called on to act in regard to it, should be considered rather in the light of a misfortune than in that of a sin. We stand not here or anywhere as the judges of men, it is not our special duty here or anywhere to guage and measure the depth of irreligion and crimes, to pass sentence on those ill-deserts which Omniscience alone can estimate, and Infinite Justice alone consider rightly. So far as we do consider the sinfulness of any course of conduct or set of principles we are to consider it in reference entirely to the further object of our benevolent action. Moreover we are to *regard and treat* the Infidel as a friend, a brother, and an equal. We are not to speak in the tone of spiritual authority, we are not to assume the air of chosen champions for defending the laws of God. We are not to appear as if occupying any fancied eminence of virtue, but, in the expression already used, we are to stand towards the Infidel in the relation of friends, of brothers, of equals. We desire to insist upon this,—there has been so much Infidelity created and so much Infidelity confirmed by a course of treatment the opposite to that of which we are speaking.

Still further that influence of the Christian upon the Infidel mind, which is to be most efficient, is the influence of direct personal communication from individual to individual. This direct action between the minds of believers and those of unbelievers is at once the most obvious, the most powerful and the most neglected of all the means of counteracting Infidelity. This moral power of the living conscience is the most irresistible of all powers. There is no baseness of degradation that can shield itself, if it would, from the influence of that lofty holiness of the breathing man, which is brought to act through deep sympathy upon it. The uneasy conscience of the wretched sinner directs his eye even against his will to the high example. There is a charm in it which he cannot resist, —a spell binds all his faculties as if his probation were about to be ended,—his power of choice and action taken away,— and as if that conscience which he has been deadening in the low pursuits of the world, and searing in the heat of his own fiery passions, were already commencing those torments which must punish the ill-spent life.—The action of such a lofty mind upon the feelings of the sinner may be regarded as virtually a rebuke and sentence upon sin,—as the decision of a voiceless tribunal premonitory of that future sentence of threatened condemnation which a higher tribunal will pronounce. Oh,— that this first decision might more frequently avert the last! "Without the Law," says Paul, "sin was dead." Now this direct influence of the Christian's mind embodies the Law, and gives it fresh life and a double energy. And because the Law is not applied to their hearts in this living shape, sin is dead in thousands. By such influence upon the mind of the spiritual Infidel the revelation is made to fall upon it like a burning light, and to scatter the mists of self-deception.

We have no doubt that these suggestions as to the spirit in which we should undertake this great work will meet the views of society, yet in order that the path of duty in a matter so important may be as plain before us as possible, perhaps we may be permitted to speak very briefly of the consequences that result when that work is carried on in a different temper,—when Christians leave Unbelievers entirely to themselves, open upon them their battery of argument and reproach from a distance, and seem to determine that whether they live or die they shall live or die under the Infidel standard. What are the consequences, then, of this spirit and this action in regard to Unbelievers as a body and as individuals?

1. How will Infidels be affected as a body? Let the higher orders of society, let the great mass of respectable men withdraw from any particular class of the community, and that class is of course thrown back from all other classes upon itself. The individuals which compose it strengthen each other in their common character and common pursuits with a common sympathy, especially, if, in addition to this line of division between the public generally and these despised men, they are attacked with persecution and reproach, they will be compressed into a systematic, thoroughly organized, and thoroughly disciplined company, a company ever strengthening itself with new accessions by means of that sympathy which real distresses and just complaints have occasioned.—Now the Infidels of the present day and especially in this country, are such that by their own energy they could never come to constitute a consistent and solid phalanx arrayed against Christianity. The congregation of the Infidel preacher would *naturally* be even more than now a floating, unsteady, unsympathetic congregation. But if Christians, instead of opposing Infidels as a body, and compelling them to defend themselves in a body, would act upon them by that individual influence which we have recommended, and not as disputatious partisans, but as the kindest of friends, Unbelief, having in itself no essential unity of character and strength, would be resolved into its original elements, the junction of its parts would be completely destroyed, and we might hope that private labour and private love would shortly succeed in checking its progress. There would be no *armies* of Infidelity to attack if the only weapons used by Christians were "the sword of the Spirit and the shield of Faith and the helmet of Salvation."—Infidelity must be a cold unsocial thing to every man's feelings, for it is adapted to no man's nature. With this icy weight at their bosoms men surely cannot feel any the more inclined to gladden each other's hearts in the full gush of a mutual sympathy. Unbelievers may rejoice in each other's sympathy when they are the objects of a fiery persecution,—but that they can bring each the solitary dissatisfaction of his own heart, each the rebuke of his own conscience, the thwarting of his own desires, the calling down of his own soul from a heavenly hope and a heavenly flight to a narrow place opened in the soil of this dim and narrow earth, each his extinction of every bright image of the past and glorious vision of futurity in the darkness of that narrow place,—that they can regard all these things as presenting a fit occasion for the joy of their mutual sympathy,—that they can rejoice greatly in the conviction that they

have but a few days to rejoice in, we cannot force ourselves to believe. Infidels cannot congratulate each other that they are Infidels. They may have a reciprocal delight in their mutual support of each other against what they regard as a common foe, they may congratulate each other that priestcraft, as they call it, vainly strives to fix its fetters upon them,—they may mutually rejoice that they have spurned from them those whom they regard as the tyrants of the human mind,—but they cannot feel and express a mutual joy that they have rejected every principle of a religious *faith*,—and if the the course recommended be pursued *most surely* these other occasions of joy will be taken *from* them. Infidelity is not satisfied with itself. It would not be revealed to itself. It glories in what it is not, and is ashamed of what it is. It loathes its own deformity. These remarks of course do not apply to all Infidelity. They would come near to having this universal application were Christianity perfectly free from corruptions in the minds and lives of her advocates, and were her doctrines rationally promulgated to the world. Infidelity and vice would then, in Christian lands, be nearly synonymous terms. For another reason Infidelity would not naturally possess the strength of united action against Christianity. There are devoted to its support none or very few of those master-spirits, those examples of intellectual and moral glory, which give strength and consistency to any cause. There are certainly no great lights before which those of other men "stand still." Christianity has risen to the loftiest rank of mind, and is extending her power down through every gradation of intellect and character to the lowest. She is every moment raising sinners from the mire of sensuality into her heavenly light. Infidelity has the highest region of her intellect in a comparatively low and dark place and she is constantly descending. Christianity made truly pure and truly rational would always and in every place check her triumphs.

2. We can say but a word of the effect which a spirit of reproach and persecution displayed by the Christian must have on the unbeliever as an individual. We may however describe it briefly in remarking that it keeps him in unbelief. Such a spirit only gives greater activity to those internal *causes* of unbelief which consist in bad passions and perverted judgments of truth. The object should be to give the predominance to his high principles and noble affections. Moreover we compel him to regard us as enemies. Loud and frequent as declarations of real friendship and good-will may

be, with such a spirit we shall appear to him as enemies. In such a case good professions are but reacting forces. The consequence of course will be to increase his hostility towards us, our brethren, and the cause we mutually support. But with the opposite spirit we should have an opposite result. Christian Intellect made active and powerful by Christian Love, addressing its appeal to the highest capacities and best affections of every opposer of the Christian Faith, must disperse the darkness from every Infidel's mind as mists are scattered before the morning sun. Christianity thus made operative becomes self-luminous. Like a pure and strong conscience it bears its testimony in itself. And if it go forth thus to enlighten and cheer the world, no man can escape its radiance, no man can pluck it from its sphere. What then is the sum of that which by our personal action *we* are to do *against* Infidelity and *for* the Infidel? What is the motto by which we should guide ourselves in contending for "the Faith once delivered to the Saints." Permit us to propose the following,—Personal Holiness, Religious Activity, Christian Love.

1. Could there have been any doubt as to the first of these qualities we should have already spoken of it, not only particularly, but above and almost in exclusion of all things else. If the corruptions of Christianity make *some* Infidels, the corruptions of the Christian make *more*. Christianity rests on the holiness of her advocates. Take this away and her walls crumble and her empire declines. Would any one so exert his strength, as to strike at Infidelity the deadliest blow in his power. Let him increase the virtue of his own soul.

2. Yet our holiness must have in outward activity an expression of its inward life. Christian intellect and Christian goodness unfelt by the world, so far as the world is concerned, are nothing but unapplied powers; they are like undiscovered principles in nature. To us the direction to be active comes with emphasis. We have something to say on the question whether our particular faith, whether Unitarianism is to be anything more than an idea, a principle, an abstraction, a scheme. May our lives answer it rightly.

3. Yet, lastly, this activity must be prompted and attended, it must be assisted and sanctified, it must be made powerful and acceptable, by deep Christian sympathy and love.—Let us consider then,

1. That, in the treatment of Infidelity, violent means used as remedies serve only to confirm the disease which has fast-

ened on the intellectual and moral nature, and let us therefore regard the work of defending Christianity against the attacks of Unbelievers as a work, not of war, but of love.

2. That, while it is unjust and unwise to denounce in general terms the doctrines of any Christian sect as corrupt and productive of Infidelity; and that, as we find, in the corruptions of Christianity and in its irrational application to the souls of men, fundamental causes of unbelief, let us expend our most anxious efforts for their removal.

3. That the advocates of Unitarianism have not yet made such wise application of *their* principles to the souls of men as to reveal to the world the intrinsic excellence of their faith.

4. That personal communion in the true spirit of Christian kindness between the mind of the Believer and the mind of the Infidel is the great means of removing the Infidelity which already exists. C. A. Bartol.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE UNITARIAN.

Dear Sir,

The following Essay written in the year 1734, by the late Robert Robinson of Cambridge, England (a writer but little known in this country I believe), is so much in accordance with the spirit, design, and tendency of the Unitarian, that your readers, I presume, can scarcely fail to be pleased and profited by the perusal. Through the whole of his laborious and useful life, amidst good report and evil report, he was the staunch, unflinching friend, the fearless and uncompromising advocate of *constitutional freedom*, civil and religious. Liberality in religion, is, even now, but little understood and practised. On this subject, therefore, we need "line upon line, and precept upon precept." It cannot be too often brought before us, it cannot be too deeply impressed on our minds. M. Harding.

An Essay on Liberality of Sentiment.

Books, like men, have a temper, and books of this kind should be good tempered; they then conciliate esteem, and like a well-bred man, give no offence; perhaps always com-

municate pleasure. It was said of Queen Mary, that she was a good tempered lady of an ill tempered religion. Pity anyone should discover sour, morose tempers, who profess a religion all founded and finished in love; I wish, for the sake of justice as well as general utility, this publication may always exemplify liberality of sentiment.*

By sentiment I mean *opinion*, and particularly religious opinion; the notion, idea, or judgment we form of the body of religion in the whole, or any of the parts that compose it. By *liberality* I mean *generosity*, which, strictly speaking, rather accompanies sentiment than goes into the nature and essence of it. It would be speaking more accurately to say, such a man is a person whose religious sentiments are accompanied with a liberality and generosity of heart towards others, who do not adopt his sentiments, than to say in a vague manner, such a person is of liberal sentiments. This is too general, and I will explain myself.

A man of liberal sentiments must be distinguished from him, who hath no *religious sentiments at all.* Nothing is more common than to meet with people, who have never turned their attention to religion. Whether it be owing to the natural littleness of the mind, or to the neglect of education, or to the gratifying of our passions, to the company we keep, the occupation we follow, or the vain prospects of future enjoyments in life, or to any other cause, the fact is too well established. The Archbishop of Cambray somewhere resembles such a person to a man in distress for money, who would go into a room, receive, and reckon, and enjoy a large sum, without being able to tell, after he came out, any thing about the dimensions or the decorations of the room. The money, the money, the object of all his hopes and fears, had filled all the capacity of his little soul, so many men enter into the world and quit it. Let them rather blush for not being able to tell whether there be a God, or whether he have spoken, or what he hath said to mankind.

The man I mean to commend, is the man of sentiment. He hath seriously and effectually investigated, both in his Bible and on his knees, in public assemblies, and in private conversations, the important articles of religion. He hath laid down principles, he hath inferred consequences; in a word, he hath adopted sentiments of his own. Nor let us

* This Essay was published in the first number of the Theological Magazine, an old work and long out of print.

confound the man of liberal sentiments, with that tame, undiscerning domestic among good people, who, though he has sentiments of his own, yet has not judgment to estimate the worth and value of one sentiment beyond another. Two truths equally clear, may not be of equal dignity and importance. Can the posture in which I address God, suppose it scriptural, be as important as the temper in which I pray to him? People of this class divide into two parts, the one have no essentials, and the other no circumstantials in religion. The man who would conceal this ignorance and indifference under pretence of liberality of sentiment, resembles Solomon's idiot, and says "one event happeneth to the clean and to the unclean; as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath." Out of the hive of those, who have no circumstantials, the objects of toleration in religion, come a third class, who indeed have sentiments, and just sentiments, but who hold them in the unrighteous dispositions of censure, slander, and persecutions. Morose and fierce as a stormy winter day, their aspect lours, and all their efforts damage the humble traveller, whose rusty cloak seems to him a nobler gift of God than all the mighty powers that endanger his comfort and his life. A generous soul will not only abstain from injuring the innocent, plundering the widow, and pillaging the orphan, but, to use a fine expression of a prophet, he will *despise* the gain of oppression, *shake his hands* from holding of bribes, *stop his ears* from hearing of blood, and *shut his eyes* from seeing evil. What can a fierce believer reply to a modest Christian uttering such a soliloquy as this? You have a fine genius; but you persecute me! You are sound in the faith; but your faith or your something works hatred to me! You are an eloquent orator; but you slander me! You sing with harmony, and pray with energy; but you increase your felicity by crucifying me. Think seriously, would the King of kings, your Lord and mine, pattern of every good work; would he treat me thus? And would you wish he should conduct himself to you, as you do to me? The man of liberal sentiments, is supposed to be of the sentiments of Jesus Christ, and in Jesus Christ there are two admirable perfections, the one extensive power, the other the kindest and most gentle use of it.

We should extend this subject to an improper length, were we to describe the exercise of liberality of sentiment, and enforce it by arguments. A sketch, then shall serve.

A generous believer of the Christian religion, in whole or

in part, will never allow himself to try to propagate his sentiments by the commission of sin. No collusion, no bitterness, no wrath, no undue influence of any kind, will he apply to make his sentiments receivable; no living thing will be less happy for his being a Christian; he will exercise his liberality by allowing those who differ from him as much virtue and integrity as he possibly can. He will say, have I read the Scriptures? so have they. Have I set God always before me? so have they. Do I act up to my best light? so do they. Are they fallible? so am I. Have they prejudices and passions? so have I. Have we both one master and are we fellow servants; and must we all give an account to the Judge of the world of the deeds done in the body? The wisest and the best way then is, to render the present life happy by agreeing where we can, and, where we cannot, by agreeing to differ.

There are, among a multitude of arguments to enforce such a disposition, the following worth our attention.

I. We should exercise liberality in union with sentiments because of the different *capacities*, *advantages*, and *tasks* of mankind. Religion employs the capacities of mankind, just as the air employs their lungs and their organs of speech. The fancy of one is lively, of another dull. The judgment of one is elastic, of another feeble, a damaged spring. The memory of one is retentive; that of another treacherous, as the wind. The passions of this man are lofty, vigorous rapid; those of that man cruel, and hum and buz, and when on the wing, sail only round the circumference of a tulip. Is it conceivable that capability so different in every thing else, should be all alike in religion? The *advantages* of mankind differ. How should he who hath no parents, no books, no tutor, no companions, equal him whom Providence hath gratified with them all? Who, when he looks over the treasures of his own knowledge, can say, this I had of a Greek, that I learned of a Roman, this information I acquired of my tutor, that was a present of my father; a friend gave me this branch of knowledge, an acquaintance bequeathed me that.—The tasks of mankind differ, so I call the employments and exercises of life. In my opinion circumstances make great men; and if we have not Cæsars in the state, and Pauls in the church, it is because neither church nor state are in the circumstances in which they were in the days of those great men. Push a dull man into a river, and endanger his life, and suddenly he will discover invention, and make efforts beyond himself. The world is a fine school of instruction. Poverty,

sickness, pain, loss of children, treachery of friends, malice of enemies, and a thousand other things drive the man of sentiments to his Bible, and, so to speak, bring him home to a repast with his benefactor, God. Is it conceivable that he, whose young and tender heart is yet all unpractised in trials of this kind, can have ascertained and tasted so many religious truths as the sufferer has?

II. We should exercise liberality along with our sentiments, because of the *depravities* as well as imperfections of mankind. The patrons of error and vice have known mankind too well to hazard the cause of sin undisguised, and in its native form. Is there a crime without an apologist, or one disgraceful action without a specious name? Is immorality any thing more than fashion? Is not deism genius, and blasphemy spirit and courage? O the godly pretences of error, the plausible pretexts of sin! How should a youth born in the lap of error, nourished and cherished with her milk, surrounded with people all in error like himself, where everything is in disguise, how should he, if his heart be depraved, how should he resist magic so full of charms! Depraved mankind! instead of persecuting you for embracing only five out of five thousand truths of religion, I will pity and esteem you, and adore the grace that emboldens you to admit the five; "you may be saved, yet so as by fire." Had I, depraved like you, perhaps more than you, had I been so powerfully attacked by error, I might not have been saved at all.

We should believe the Christian religion with liberality, in the third place, because, *every part of the Christian religion inculcates generosity.* Christianity gives us a character of God! what a character does it give, God is love; Christianity teaches the doctrine of providence; but what a providence! *Upon whom doth not its light arise!* Is there an animalcule so little, or a wretch so forlorn, as to be forsaken and forgotten of his God? Christianity teaches the doctrine of redemption; but the redemption of whom? Of all tongues, kindred, nations, and people; of the infant of a span, and the sinner of a hundred years old: a redemption generous in its principle, generous in its price, generous in its effects, fixed sentiments of divine munificence, and revealed with a liberality, for which we have no name. In a word, the illiberal Christian always acts contrary to the spirit of his religion; the liberal man alone thoroughly understands it.

IV. We should be liberal, because no other spirit is *exemplified* in the infallible guides, whom we profess to follow. I

set one Paul against a whole array of uninspired men. Some preach Christ of good will, and some of envy and strife. What then? Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice, yea and will rejoice. One eateth all things, another eateth herbs; but why dost THOU judge thy brother? "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." We often inquire, what was the doctrine of Christ, and what was the practice of Christ: suppose we were to institute a third question, of what TEMPER was Christ?

Once more: We should be liberal as well as orthodox, because truth, especially the truths of Christianity, *do not want any supports* from our illiberality. Let the little bee guard its little honey with its little sting; perhaps its little life may depend a little while on that little nourishment. Let the fierce bull shake his head, and nod his horn, and threaten his enemy, who seeks to eat his flesh, and wear his coat, and live by his death, poor fellow! his life is in danger; I forgive his bellowing and his rage. But the Christian religion, is that in danger? and what human efforts can render that true which is false, that odious which is lovely? Christianity is in no danger, and therefore it gives its professor life, and breath, and all things, except a power of injuring others. They who have such powers, and have incorporated them with Christianity, have derived them from some other cause, for *the wisdom that is from above is pure, peaceable, gentle,* firm as a rock, and so to speak, defies the unavailing rage of surrounding waves.

In fine: Liberality in the profession of religion is a *wise and innocent policy.* The bigot lives at home; a reptile he crawled into existence, and there in his hole he lurks a reptile still. A generous Christian goes out of his own party, associates with others, and gains improvement by all. The pride of some Christians is so great, that they cannot conceive there should be anything true, which they do not understand, or anything excellent which they do not possess. They cannot bear contradiction, and, conceiving themselves as models of religion, they judge of the perfection of others by the proportion they bear to themselves. So near me, so near orthodoxy; so much like me, so much like what a man ought to be; so many features of me, so much the resemblance of Jesus Christ. *O heart of man! deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! who can know thee?* It is a Persian proverb; *A liberal hand is better than a strong arm.* The dignity of Christianity is better supported by acts of liberality, than by accuracy of reasoning: but when both go to-

gether, when a man of sentiment can clearly state, and ably defend his religious principles, and when his heart is as generous as his principles are inflexible, he possesses strength and beauty in an eminent degree. May God of his infinite mercy diffuse a rich abundance of his spirit among all good men.

The Signs of the Times.

Recent events, which have occurred on either side of us, seem to me to demand the sober consideration of every friend of Christian liberty, of good order, of our free institutions. They involve principles of far-reaching extent, connected with the best interests of man. They are scarcely I think to be considered as transient, momentary bursts of popular feeling, suddenly stirred from its depths, and as suddenly to subside. They indicate too plainly a sad deficiency of high-minded principle in the great mass of the community, and a very lax way of viewing such outrages, among a portion of it who might well be supposed to regard them more justly, which to my own mind is alarming beyond measure. If such things are to be looked upon calmly, and much more complacently,—if the example set in one place, in reference to one object of hatred or vengeance, is to be followed at once in others, in regard to other objects, and there shall be found those everywhere, who, occupying respectable stations in society, shall permit their prejudices to blind their sober judgment, and make them virtually side with the mob either in opinion or action, then farewell to our boasted freedom of thought, and word, and deed. We are fast preparing ourselves to wear heavier chains than ever British power dreamed of forging.

I do not indeed fear that things are to reach this horrible extremity. I trust under the good Providence of God, that public virtue and Christian principle enough remain amongst us, once roused to energetic and efficient action, to put a check to these disorders, and preserve our land truly free. But there are signs of the times of sober portent, and well worthy of grave consideration, and to some of these I ask attention. I shall speak of four—1. The extremely corrupt state of the public press, and the immense power it wields. 2. The prevailing spirit of intolerance. 3. The

tendency to act in masses, too often exclusive in their very character. 4. The prevalent want of truth.

1. First, then, "the signs of the times" are portentous in the extremely corrupt state of the public press, joined to the immense power it wields. There is no difference amongst us upon the subject of the liberty of the press. It is guaranteed by the constitution of government under which we live, and is regarded by all as a thing not to be touched nor questioned. But liberty in this respect, any more than in any other, is not licentiousness. From the very nature of the case, it is a kind of liberty peculiarly susceptible of abuse, and can be preserved in its integrity only by a rigid regard to the great objects for which it was secured on the part of those who conduct the press itself; and the watchful purity of those, to whose entertainment or instruction it ministers. The press was to be free that it might always present an easy channel, along which fountains of knowledge as they were successively opened, might send their refreshing streams. It was to be free, that an easy and efficient instrument might be possessed, by which the public mind might be rightly directed, the machinations of tyranny exposed, the body politic from time to time invigorated, and a healthful tone of public feeling quickened and preserved. It was to become the handmaid of letters, science, and the arts, and of religion, the true foundation and support of all that is holy and valuable to men. And when we look back at the past history of the race, it requires but a glance to perceive, that the press has nobly discharged its high office of enlightening, delighting, and blessing the world. But for it, knowledge would still be the monopoly of the few, and the sublimest oratory, the world has ever known, the most gorgeous and thrilling poetry its bards ever chanted, the most powerful arguments for religion and immortality which the human mind ever framed, or the Divine mind ever inspired, would have been lost amid the vague traditions through which it would have been attempted to transmit them. Indeed it scarce admits of a doubt, that but for the press, the world's civilization in aught of the high and extended sense in which we now contemplate it, would be a dream.

I did not intend, however, to descant on the value to the world of the great discovery of printing. But it is plain even from these few remarks, how immensely important and powerful an engine it furnished to mankind,—powerful, be it remembered, as well for evil as for good. It is sometimes

thought, that those who immediately conduct the public press, are answerable for all the harm which it may do when corrupted. It is forgotten, that, like every thing else provided for the public, its character largely depends upon the general character of that public amid and for which it is established. No man would venture to outrage the good and correct feelings and principles of a portion of the community through the press, if he did not feel sure of the support and countenance of another portion of it. And unhappily, in a country like ours, hardly any subject can arise likely at all to agitate the public mind, which a shrewd publisher, watching the current of events, may not on one side or the other turn to the account, either of his avarice or his popularity. There is here a continual temptation to make the press the exciting cause, or the supporter, of a popular ferment. A story loosely put together, or artfully gotten up for the occasion, which left to itself might soon die, acquires in the columns of a gazette a thousandfold of strength, and becomes in its columns the source of incalculable mischief. Party or personal animosity, can it only employ this channel of communication, may instil poison into the public mind, which will rankle and ferment there, and at last burst forth with volcanic fury. And if when such is the case, and every consideration demands that the storm should be at once allayed, the press continues to throw off its guarded inuendoes, its artful surmises, its coloured statements of facts as they transpire, or its cautious and qualified censures of those who have done what they may to disturb the public peace, and the settled order of society, it may easily be seen how the mischief may be perpetuated, and what accumulated strength and support may result to the aggressors.

I have had in mind thus far no one side of any of the great questions in politics, morals, or religion, which divide the country. On almost all these questions, there has been much to blame on both sides. Private character and reputation have been tampered with, and made the butt of the foulest abuse, however pure and exalted they were in reality, merely by their being associated with some obnoxious party, principles, or sect. That very freedom of speech, and discussion, which should be respected as the twin sister of the freedom of the press, has virtually been denounced and attempted to be destroyed. The freedom of the press has thus become tyranny of the press—as dreadful to a sensitive mind, as an Ostracism. Upon a variety of subjects from time to time arising, a

man must forsooth hold his peace, or consent to be the object of ribaldry and slander, to be held up to public scorn or indignation, and possibly to become the sport of an infuriated mob. And what is worse, there are those who in each case will justify and applaud it. It has been said by one of our countrymen recently returned from Europe, that with all our boasts of liberty, there was vastly more enjoyed in England and some parts of the continent than here. It were well worth while to consider then, whether it be not for the welfare of all to purify the public press; and by cherishing a more healthy tone of public feeling, restrain its excesses, and make it more nearly what it was designed to be.

2. Closely connected with that which we have now considered, another inauspicious "sign of the times" is the prevalent spirit of intolerance. I do not say that there has never been so intolerant an age as this, but that, considering the advanced age of the world, the diffusion of knowledge, the boasts of liberality which are always put forth, and the means of understanding the various subjects which are presented successively to our contemplation, there does exist, widely diffused, an intolerant spirit far more worthy of some centuries ago. There is a disposition to look upon men with regard to their opinions rather than their characters, and to treat them, and speak of them accordingly, which tells poorly for our real liberality. Take any of the exciting subjects which have within a few years agitated our country, and you will find abundant illustration of this. In politics, were we to believe a hundredth part of what has been said, and written, and published, concerning men high in office or influence in the nation, we must think them monsters unworthy to live. Take the subject of anti-slavery, and whether the principles of its advocates be right or wrong, or the language they have used, or the measures they have pursued or proposed, justifiable or the contrary, in what a torrent of prejudice and crimination, has it been attempted to whelm them all without exception; and in how many cases has this cause served to screen the enormity of those outrages, which have disgraced our commercial metropolis.—Take the case of the Catholic Church. Here for several years among various denominations of Protestant Christians, has the cry been raised, and echoed from one end of the country to the other, that Popery was on the ascendant; and all that even the maddest of the Reformers, in the zeal of darker ages had said in the bitterness of their hatred against it, has been republished to

the world as the genuine picture of its present abominations. That it is a corrupt church in its doctrinal faith, I do not doubt—but it only shares this censure with those who most violently denounce it. That it abounds in a multitude of idle and childish ceremonies, we all agree—but I cannot doubt there have been many whom they have rightly affected. That its clergy have in many instances in all ages been unworthy of their sacred functions, I do not deny—but I ask, where is the church which is immaculate in this respect? That the Catholic communion holds its place of usefulness for a large class in the community who cannot be reached by any other, few who reflect will doubt. With all this, when I consider that this communion contains a larger part of Christendom, than all other Christian Churches together, that it has produced some of the greatest and best men that have ever lived, that the arts of peace have flourished under its protection; that it preserved to us whatever of ancient literature which has come down to our days; that it has often nursed a vigorous, self-denying, and healthful piety, and furnished forth the Reformers themselves with their best strength and most proved armour for the battle of reform; that it was long the only friend of education, the only light of a barbarous world; that it elevated the cross, that merciful and blessed symbol of hope, to hosts of poor pilgrims on earth to guide them to heaven, when military power and feudal ferocity were grinding them to the dust,—when in fine I remember, that in our neighbouring city, the Catholic episcopate was long held by one whose meek, unobtrusive, devoted piety, proved him, however obnoxious the doctrines of his church, one of the truest disciples of Christ since the ascension, I cannot but feel that gross injustice has been done, and is doing to this ancient community. It has been condemned most unjustly, and beyond all measure. I do not defend the Catholic religion—far from it. But I hold in regard to that, as to all other forms of Christianity, that it has its good as well as evil, and the chief reason for adverting to it at all, is to rebuke that intolerant spirit which would even now, had it the power, vent itself in far worse than indiscriminate denunciation. Indeed, who can say, but the exaggerated statements which have been sent through the land within a few years, as to the designs of the Romish church,—the zeal which has been enlisted against it among those who have been taught to consider it the mother of abominations,—and the misrepresentations of much of its doctrine and discipline which have been current, have

been the remote cause at least of the scenes of horror and outrage, which have but just been enacted at Charlestown?—If it be so, if these scenes had their origin in mere differences of religious opinion, and prejudices and hostility excited on their account, what a horrible illustration of the intolerance of the age do they furnish!

It is high time to pause,—and as men and Christians to reflect soberly upon the state of things around us. If for holding and uttering obnoxious opinions, a man's house may be demolished, his furniture burned before his eyes, his family turned away unsheltered at night, and the churches of God desecrated and despoiled—if institutions for education may be pillaged and burned, the cemeteries of the dead violated, and a large family of defenceless females driven in destitution to desert their home amid the yells and curses of a mob,—if all this may be done in one case, and in regard to one set of opinions,—who can say in the fluctuation of sentiments among men, what portion of the community may next be visited by the same condemnation? If the guardians of the public morals, and the administrators of the public laws, and the laws themselves thus in charge, may not be trusted to regulate under God all matters connected with the public weal, without the horrible interposition of a lawless multitude urged on by passion, or the instigation of artful leaders, or a base lust of plunder and destruction, who, I ask, is safe?

3. Another "sign of the times" worthy of notice, is the tendency to act in masses, to move in parties exclusive in their whole spirit and character. I allude not now, to what of itself is a very important point in this connexion, the danger of men losing all individuality of character, of every individual being so merged in the mass, that he becomes but the copy and reflection of all around him; but rather to the fact, that, upon almost all subjects which address themselves to human consideration, men feel they must divide off into parties, and these parties act on the principle of an exclusive regard to a particular object and view of the object, and with a disposition to denounce and excommunicate all who differ from, or will not act with them. "He that is not with us is against us"—is the universal motto, and adopted with literal exactness by men of every variety of opinion and feeling, gathered into distinct and organized masses—and few comparatively have the courage to hold their own opinions by themselves, without being forced by party clamour, or allured by friendly solicitation into the ranks of one side or the other of

the numerous questions which arise. Thus opinions are forced—a few zealous individuals are called to become distinguished leaders—hosts are gradually or suddenly mustered together at their bidding—and with all the show of open and fair debate, the mass moves like one man, and succeeds or is defeated together. Every individual wears a mark by which he is known, and is caressed or shunned according as those he meets have or have not the same.

There is one circumstance, however, which, in the good providence of God, appears likely to counteract the worst effects of this condition of things. These parties are becoming so numerous, that a new set of men cannot be found for each; and consequently those who are opposed on one subject soon find themselves acting together on another. Still, in every case, there will be much of the exclusive spirit at which I have hinted. The language held by men of various parties and associations will in effect be—"you must *think* with us—you must *act* with us,—or lose fellowship." This is capable of illustration in many of the associations which exist. In the Temperance cause, as in every other, there will be men who are ready to rush upon every extreme—who are never satisfied with a gradual, however sure, success, but are always aiming at some striking and noisy result; and all who are not of the same temperament, or the same way of thinking, are viewed and treated as lukewarm or hostile. In the anti-slavery movements of the day, it is not sufficient that a man should hold the anti-slavery principles—but he must act with the society, or be abjured. And between that and the Colonization Society the war must on either side be a war of extermination, and the idea of each pursuing its own path is heretical beyond measure. To stand aloof from one, is taken to be an alliance with the other:—to disavow both, is to take the character it is thought of timid or time-serving. Similar remarks apply to almost every association which exists. Look at the various denominations of Christians among us—the case is nearly the same. There is a suspicious eye turned upon those who do not worship, or think, in the same way—and that way must be in each instance, "our" way.

In this condition of things, it behoves him who would act as becomes a Christian, to consider warily each question which is presented to him, and to act, not upon impulse, not from a love of party, not from prejudice, but from cool, deliberate conviction. To do this at all times, when beset on the right hand and on the left, is no easy matter. But a higher

principle than conformity to human judgment should actuate him, and in the end he will have his reward. Above all let him carry into every association which he joins, or hold towards those he does not join, anything but an exclusive spirit. Let him not so array together opinions and those who hold them, as to involve both in the same sweeping denunciation.

4. The last of the "signs of the times" to which I advert, is the general absence or neglect of truth: and if anything be alarming it is this. I forbear to enlarge on the importance of truth in all the relations, offices, and dealings of life, and will only say, that it is not important merely, but essential to the permanence of anything and everything valuable in life. All confidence in the intercourse of man with man depends upon it—all our knowledge of the past, the distant and that which we have not explored, depends upon it:—the whole economy of society, the whole system of instruction,—the brightest hopes which fill and sustain the soul,—all fail with the failure of the truth of the facts or statements on which they are built. Now there is a most deplorable lack of truth in almost every department of life, public or private. Look into political life, and see how measures are falsified, characters vilified, motives misrepresented, conduct aspersed, hastily or deliberately, upon proof or against it, as the case may be. In the business of legislation, how extremely difficult it is, at least for all (and that is the mass), who have not leisure or ability to watch narrowly every incident of the long train as it happens, to form any tolerably accurate judgment upon the subjects most warmly discussed, or reported upon. In religion, the views, principles, theory, and modes of worship, of the different denominations, are so garbled and misstated in the mouths of sectarians of almost every party, that we would think truth had deserted even the altar, and become lost amid the crowd of prejudiced or bigoted devotees. In social intercourse how little reliance can be placed on the thousand rumours which every day echoes; and how carelessly are these repeated and enlarged by each mouth which tells them. In more private and retired life even, the same foul spirit of untruth is too often found; deceit mingles in all the relatives of the family circle, and discontent, and embarassment, and mortification, and corruption are the consequences.—I have before spoken of the corruption of the public press. In nothing is it more corrupt than in its little regard to truth. With a recklessness perfectly amazing, that view of almost every important subject which gains public notice is given on either side, which suits

best with the general objects to which it is devoted. Accordingly the accounts furnished of every such subject, are in two papers published in the same place, on the same day, with like advantage enjoyed by each, diametrically opposite to each other. To such an extent is this the fact, that it is extremely difficult to learn the actual state of things, the truth, upon almost any subject. Everything seems more or less misrepresented. Exaggeration swells trifles into monsters. Envy contracts cases of unquestionable liberality, were they rightly understood, into meannesses. The spirit of detraction strips virtue of its deserved admiration, and that of flattery lauds very moderate deserts into sublime goodness.

Need the danger of this "sign of the times" be pointed out? Can it be doubted that its tendency in public life, is to deprive the commonwealth of the services of the best of its citizens, who will be led to withhold themselves from office, rather than become marks for every party demagogue, and unprincipled scribbler of the day? In religion must it not lead to the perpetuation of that terrible spirit of bigotry and exclusion, which perhaps more than any single cause gives edge to the weapons of infidelity? Must it not sooner or later, if not seasonably checked, undermine the very foundation of all sound morals among us, and destroy all confidence between man and man? Look too, at its effect on individual character. How can we be Christians, if wanting in truth? How can a religion of truth be supposed to sway that bosom from which integrity of purpose and word, and deed is banished? If there be any single trait which gives harmony and beauty and perfection to the character, it is truth. Let this be absent, and every other good quality is marred—the force of every other virtue is weakened—the loveliest traits prove but the exterior of loveliness, from which the soul, the essence, the substance, is wanting. And in proportion as the want of truth pervades a community or a nation, will all that is glorious or valuable in it prove frail and evanescent.

I have aimed to lead to sure trains of thought upon "the signs of the times," which, if dwelt upon and cherished, may prove useful to ourselves, to the generation of which we are a part, to those which are to come. If it be asked what is the remedy for the evils of which I have spoken, I answer in one word—True Religion—by which I mean the Christian religion—the Gospel of Jesus Christ.—It is Infidelity—it is the prevalence of infidel principles—either avowedly, or practically, and I know not but the last is the more dangerous, which is at the bottom of all. It were morally impossible if,

the gospel in its length and breadth dwelt in every heart—if its spirit and temper animated all of every age and station who have been brought to its light—if its lofty sanctions and its inspiring and immortal hopes filled every bosom—it were morally impossible that such as I have pointed out would be "the signs of the times." Would that I could awaken all to feel this as they ought! Too many are treating the Christian religion with a most unworthy neglect—are living according to any other principles than its spiritual, self-denying ones—are concentrating all their efforts, and devoting all their time and talents to the things of this world, careless of its brevity, forgetful of judgment and eternity. Alas, what multitudes of men, who possibly flatter themselves all the while how wise they are, seem to regard religion only as a part, so to speak, of worldly policy—nay, of public police;—its institutions, as possibly necessary to the temporal order and welfare of the community;—its ministers, as hired labourers, paid to do their stated work as well as they may,—not that they have any belief in much of what they speak, but only at the best, that they are ready to do their part to keep the peace of society. Again, how many are there, who are contented to contribute to the support of public worship,—to appear once on the Sabbath in their places at church, to be prayed for and to be preached at by another,—and who retire from the sanctuary, perfectly self-complacent, that they have listened with becoming reverence, and that good as it was, it fitted others better than themselves. Still again, how many are there who, with all outward respect for religion, give it no place in their hearts—live entirely without its influences—and become the stumbling-blocks and causes of offence to many weaker brethren! There is a most pressing call on all those, on all of us, to give the Gospel that sway over our consciences, over our lives, which Christ designed it to have. Christians should so wear their Christianity, that it may shed around them wherever they move holy influences. Were all that are called such, truly such, the power which is wielded by the public press would bear always and beneficently on the best interests of man; the intolerant, illiberal temper of which I have spoken, would cease; the various parties and sects organized for one or another object, would act harmoniously each in its own place,—and truth, in all her virgin purity, would company with every heart, to purify and bless. Every one should feel that he has a personal charge in this great work—and look devoutly to God for grace to help him fulfil it. No thought of

its difficulty—no doubt of its practicableness—should be suffered. Onward to the mark! should be the watchword. Time, talents, opportunity, life, should all be devoted as God would have them! Death, whenever it comes, should find each at his post! and then heaven's gates will open to receive each one to rest! F. A. Farley.

The following was handed to us in the form of a letter addressed to a Clergyman, which form we have not thought it worth while to alter. We publish it as containing a very satisfactory reply to the arguments said to have been urged in favour of the Trinity, by the preacher who is addressed.

Letter addressed to Rev. L. W.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

I heard your sermon on the doctrine of the Trinity. As you delivered it in a number of places, it became considerably noticed, and seems to have been accepted as one of your best performances. I am disposed, Sir, to give you credit for the ingenuity displayed in that discourse, and for a happy talent as a speaker from the pulpit. And I was particularly pleased with your *devotional exercises;* which were, apparently, and I doubt not, *sincerely,* what such public exercises always *should be*, but what, unhappily, they are not always; *humble*, *simple*, *fervent*. I was not, however, altogether pleased with the sermon; and although I disclaim and abhor the character of a *captious*, *uncandid*, *and fault-finding* hearer, yet, I think, without justly incurring the imputation of it, I may take the liberty of making some animadversions upon the sermon.

Your text was the baptismal commission, containing the formulary; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

The introduction was brief, consisting of a few remarks directed against the pride of human reasoning. You then stated your theme; the *Divine Trinity;* and announced four heads of discourse: 1. Definition: 2. Consideration of objections: 3. Confirmation: and 4. The practical importance of the doctrine.

You appeared to decline attempting to support the doctrine, in the form it is sometimes caused to assume, whether by its adversaries or friends, but only according to *your own definition;* and you remarked that "many a handsome face has been made to cast a homely profile." Your definition was nearly, or precisely, the following: "*That in the God-*

head there are three persons; the term person, however, being used in some uncommon sense; three distinctions; three somethings, call them what you will; which are the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."

In this definition, Sir, the doctrine, as everyone may perceive, is placed on a very indeterminate foundation. And it is suspected that the design of it was to envelope the subject in a kind of obscurity and mysticism; and thus to place its defenders on a stand, where they may be invisible, intangible, and inaccessible. But, Sir, when you, and others, who have adopted that definition, come to the discussion of the *doctrine itself*, and the uses of it, both you, and they, obviously employ the word *person* in its *usual import;* intending by it, some *distinct, entire, rational agent.* You speak of the *person of the Son* as distinct from that of the Father, previously to the event of the incarnation; and you speak of the *personality* of the Holy Ghost, and maintain that He is as distinct a person from the Divine Father and Son, as they are from each other. But when the inquiry is put—*Can the one only true God be more than one rational agent? Can there be more than one truly and properly Divine Understanding, Will, and Consciousness?* You then retreat into the place of refuge, previously prepared, and there shroud yourself in misty dimness and impenetrable clouds.

You occupied time, Sir, as you will recollect, to prove the *personality* of the Holy Ghost. You affirmed that he must be a *person*, and not an attribute, or an operation, or an office, because the Father is a *person*, and the Son is a *person*, and it would be grossly incongruous to connect two *persons* and an *attribute* together, in the manner, they are connected, in the *formulary of Baptism*, and in the *Benediction*, and in the *testimony of the three Heavenly Witnesses*, [a spurious passage]. The Father being a person, the Son, of course, must be a person, and the Holy Spirit a person, for each is distinct from, and equal to the other. Now, Sir, in asserting these things, do you not use the word *person*, in its *common signification?* As much so, at least, as the term *God* (whose mode of existence none can comprehend), is commonly understood to signify a *person;* i. e. *a Being possessed of an understanding, a will, and a power of voluntary effort.* If the term person, in the doctrine of the Trinity, mean nothing more than some uncertain and incomprehensible *distinction*, whence can it be known that this *distinction* amounts to what you make of it? or that it will answer your purpose in the divisional work of redemption? or that it is any thing more than what a con-

sistent Unitarian may admit it to be? So long as you cannot define, or understand, what the distinction is, how can you know that the second distinction is equal to the first; or that the third is, in personality, equal to the two former? Can we safely reason from terms which we do not understand?

And here, Sir, I will premise that it is not my object to decry the doctrine of *a Divine Trinity. I admit the doctrine.* Whoever believes the New Testament must admit the existence of *the Father, the Son,* and *the Holy Ghost. These three Divine Names constitute the Scriptural Trinity.* And I further admit that this doctrine is *incomprehensible.* "No man knoweth who the Son is but the Father, neither knoweth any man who the Father is but the Son." The Son is called *God,* and therefore He *is God;* but in what sense *He is God,* has, probably never been comprehended by the human intellect. Of one thing, however, I think, we may feel a full confidence, viz. that he is *not God* in any sense inconsistent with the fact—*that the Father is the only true God.*

In regard to the *personification* of the Holy Spirit, there can be no doubt; but the truth of his *personality* manifestly is disputable. I will not say that the doctrine of it *is untrue;* nor can I say that I do believe it to be true. Your argument in confirmation of the doctrine, derived from the connection of the names, is, in my view, inconclusive. I would refer you to the three earthly witnesses, "There are three that bear witness on the earth, the Spirit, and the Water, and the Blood." If the Spirit be a *person,* as you teach us, and if your principle of inference be correct, then the Water and the Blood must be *persons* also.

As a further test of this principle of inference, adopted by you, Sir, we will change the application of it, and ascertain what it will then effect. The *water* and the *blood* are *not* persons, therefore, the *Spirit* is *not* a person; because thus to connect *persons* and *things* together, is improper and inadmissible. The case stands thus—The three Heavenly Witnesses are, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. The first and second of these witnesses are *persons,* therefore, you infer that the *third is a person also.* The three which bear witness on the earth are the Spirit, the water, and the blood. Two of these, the water and the blood, are *not* persons; the inference, therefore, is, that the other, the Spirit, is *not* a person. The very same witness is, by this rule, proved *to be* a person, in the one case, and *not to be* a person in the other. The rule will prove two opposite things. And in doing so its

true character cannot be mistaken. It is an illegitimate rule.

You will also recollect, Sir, that you ridiculed the stupidity of those who could not see the force of your reasoning, in this instance, by comparing it to what that of Lot, in Sodom, would have been, had he told his sons-in-law, that he had seen *three* men; and when asked to explain himself, had replied, that he reckoned the *shining wings* of the *two* angels to constitute *a third person.* What a happiness it is, Sir, to have on every needful occasion, just and apt thoughts, both for argument and illustration.

Having defined the doctrine, you proceeded to consider the objections. I do not remember that you took notice of more than one; *its being incomprehensible, and apparently self-inconsistent.* This you admitted, but contended that it was not *impossible.* I doubt, Sir, the perfect justice of this representation. The opposers of the doctrine have strongly urged the *absence of scriptural proof*, and the irreconcilable character of it, to the unity of God; so much and so frequently insisted upon in the Bible. You gave a variety of illustrations that a doctrine might be *incomprehensible*, but not *absurd.* The propriety of this cannot reasonably be questioned; but they did not, to my mind, remove the objections to the doctrine of the Trinity, *as it is commonly expressed and understood.* That a being, or a thing, should be *three* in some respects, and *one*, in another respect, is no inconsistency. But that a being or a thing should be *properly one*, so as to *exclude plurality*, and yet, at the same time, truly and properly *three*, so as to imply plurality, is a contradiction. An army cannot have *one*, and only one supreme commander, and yet have *three persons* who are each and severally invested with supreme authority. If they are not persons, in the proper sense of the word, they, of course, are not properly and severally, *commanders;* and if each of the three Divine Distinctions be not *persons properly so called*, then each of them, cannot, in the proper acceptation of the word, *be God.* For how can each of them, severally and properly *be God*, when each of them is not properly a *person?* For is it not as evident that there is a Divine *person*, as it is, that there is a God?

The old and genuine doctrine of the Trinity is that of three distinct persons, in *the proper import of the words.* So the doctrine stood for more than a thousand years. The idea of an uncommon and an unknown sense of the term *person*, is a modern invention. And it is an *innovation.* It is not *orthodoxy.* And we need not travel far back, in the track of time,

in order to arrive at the period when the publication of such a sentiment would have been as perilous to its author, as it was for the adventurous Luther to denounce the Holy Roman Catholic Church. And this new invention, Sir, I believe, is of no worth to the cause. As a fact, it cannot be proved. And as an expedient, it can have little efficiency. While it may, for a moment, seem to afford some partial relief at *one point*, it causes an intolerable pressure *at another*. The old Trinitarians held that the Divine Nature of the Son, being truly and properly *God*, was truly and properly a *person*. You hold that He is the *true God*, and yet, as far as Divine, not a *true person*, in the known acceptation of the term. And here, Sir, do you not perceive that an unsupportable oppression lies upon the neck of your theory?

The Westminster Divines were unadulterated Trinitarians. They were explicit and said, "There are three persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." And here is no self-inconsistency. For the term, *Godhead*, does not necessarily express *one individual person*. As there may be one, two, or more, persons constituting a *committee* or a *directory*, so a *Godhead* may be conceived of, as consisting of *one* person, or of *a plurality*. And, Sir, when you, and others, speak of three distinct and equal persons, in one God, you, and they, obviously and necessarily use the term *God*, in the sense of *Godhead*. But when, in the same breath, you declare of each of the three persons, that they, individually, severally, and properly, *are God*, you use the word *God*, in a different and *individual* sense. We will take an example from the Athanasian Creed. *The Father, who is not the Son, is God; the Son, who is not the Father, is God; and the Holy Ghost, who is different from the Father and the Son, is God; and yet, there is but one God.* It is manifest that the term GOD is here used in different senses, and, in the last instance, in the sense of *Godhead;* for otherwise the language would be as contradictory, as it would be to say; "Our earth has one moon named A, and another different moon named B, and another, named C, and yet our earth has but one moon."

The fact being undeniable, that you, and other Trinitarians, often use the term God as equivalent to *Godhead*, (I do not, however, mean the scriptural, but the catechetical sense of *Godhead*), the inquiry properly comes up, *Is it consistent with the language and instructions of the Bible to affix that meaning to the term, God?* The Holy Scriptures not only

teach the doctrine of one God, and mention no other than one, but they also frequently and expressly declare on the contrary, that there is *not* more than ONE. "The Lord our God is one Lord." I am God and there is no other." "Thou shalt have no other God than me." "Beside me there is no God, I know not any." "There is no other God but one." "To us there is one God, the Father." "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus." It hence appears that either the unity of God must be a proper and perfect unity, or that the Scriptures are calculated to deceive us. And shall we impute such an attribute to the Holy Book of God?

Having arrived at your third head, the *Confirmation*, you announced that the doctrine of the Trinity was purely a matter of *Divine Revelation*, and could be learned and supported from no other source; and then you proceeded to adduce the proof-texts.—These you divided into two classes, the *direct* and the *indirect*. I entirely concede, Sir, the correctness of your remarks, that the doctrine of the Trinity, if true, must be learned from the Holy Scriptures. To the Law and to the Testimony, let every Christian make his appeal. If the doctrine of the Trinity be found there, plainly asserted, let it not, even for the price of life, be denied. We would remember the tremendous malediction—*If any man add unto, or take away from, the things of this Book, God shall inflict upon him the plagues denounced in it; and take away his part, his name, from the Book of Life.* "See that thou diminish not aught from them." We can have no rational motive for perverting the truth, for deceiving ourselves, or misleading others.

Your first proof-text, was Matthew xxviii. 19; *the commission for Baptism.* The second, was 1 Cor. xiii. 14; *the Benediction.* The third was 1 John v. 7; *the Three Heavenly Witnesses.* The fourth was Rev. i. 4, 5, *the Benedictory Salutation of the Apostle to the Churches.* You represented that the three names, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, stand on equal grounds, and consequently, by implication, place those signified by them on the ground of *equality;* so that if any of them be the TRUE GOD, the others, must, likewise, sustain the same character. I have already, Sir, expressed my hesitation to admit this principle of making inferences. It is not correct; it is illegitimate. I could prove the truth of my remark by producing, probably, more than a hundred examples. But I am unwil-

ling to spend the time. The proper method of determining Who, and What, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are, is to apply *the rule of analogy (Professor S.'s usus loquendi)*, i. e. inquire what these terms evidently signify in other parts of the Bible.

Who, then, is the Father? In answer, read John, the Gospel, xvii. 3. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The Father is here called *the only true God!* And it is the Son, who gives this style and character to the Father. The language seems to be so simple and explicit, as to be capable of but one meaning. It plainly declares *one God*, and *only one;* and that the *Divine Father is this one God.* And this language, and this sentiment, comport, perfectly and obviously with the current language and sentiment, of all parts of the Bible. And, Sir, does this style and character of the Divine Father imply no more than He is *one of three co-equal persons in the Godhead?* And is it equally true, of the Son, that He is the *only true God;* and also of the Holy Spirit? What force, then, is there in language? and what dependence can be put upon it? The explicit and solemn declaration of the Lord Jesus Christ is, that the *Father is the only true God;* and yet according to the doctrine of the Trinity, *as it is usually understood*, there are two other persons that are severally *the only true God.* Who is it, Sir, that takes liberty in construing the language of the Sacred Word? Are the *ultra-Universalists* the only persons who do this? Surely they are not alone.

It cannot be justly said that the text, in John xvii. 3, is but a *solitary* one, and must therefore, bend, in its interpretations, to the general sentiment of the Scriptures. There is another, 1 Cor. viii. 6, of a very kindred description. "But to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things." The apostle in this passage, utters a truth which he seems to have thought no Christian, nor Jew, was inclined to doubt, for he states it, not as a *dogma*, or as a *conclusion*, but as a *premise*, as a point of doctrine so fully established, that he might reason from it. And, Sir, I could now proceed and adduce text after text, confirming the sentiment that the *Father is the only true God.* But I must desist. There is no necessity. The truth of it appears, as it were, on every page, in the Bible.

We have, I trust, found who the Father is; and now proceed to inquire *Who is the Son? He is Jesus Christ whom*

God hath sent into the world, to seek and save that which is lost. He is the Mediator between God and man. He is the Son of God; the only begotten and dearly beloved Son of the Divine Father: He is the Son of God in a sense, in which no other person is. He is the Redeemer; the only Saviour of men. He is the resurrection and the life. By Him God made the worlds; and by Him, he hath appointed a day, in which He will judge the world. It deserves to be noted, that, in the two sacred texts, above considered, the Son is not only distinguished from the *Father*, but is distinguished from *the only true God*. The Father is *never* distinguished from the only true God. The Son is *always* thus distinguished. The prerogative of the Father is different from that of the Son. The Father hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world, by that man whom he hath ordained. The Father sent the Son, and commissioned him, by commandment, for what he should do, and what he should speak. The Father dwells in the Son; and in the Son dwells the fulness of the Godhead. The Son of himself can do nothing; it is the Father in him, that doeth the work. The Son arose from the dead, and is invested with all power in heaven and earth; and it was the Father who raised him from the dead, and exalted him with his own right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. The Son had power to lay down his life, and to take it again, and this commandment, he had received from the Father.

We are aware that he said, *I and my Father are one;* and that he also represented that he and his disciples were one. But he did not say that he and his Father are *equals;* nor will any believe that he and his disciples are equal, the one to the other. The *oneness* of which he spake was, manifestly, a *moral union*, and not a *physical unity*. The apostle declares of the Son, that though he was in the form of God, and did not think it robbery to be as God, or equal to God, yet he condescended to forego that honour. The meaning cannot be that he was the same Being, *as the one eternal God;* for that construction would divest the passage of all consistent meaning; nor can it signify, that the Son was equal to the Father *in all essential respects*, for then it could have been no object with him to aspire to the honour of being *as God*, or *equal to God*, because, on the supposition, such he was and ever must have been. Perhaps the meaning is, *that previously to his incarnation the Divine Son was, as the Representative of his Divine Father, invested with a*

certain formal glory, and worshipped in heaven; and that He voluntarily resigned it in order to come into this world in the great errand of salvation for mankind. But what the precise import of the passage is, I do not pretend to know; neither do you know, Sir; and perhaps no man will know, on earth, unless it be by the help of *inspiration.* Let this, however, be as it may, one ground may be safely taken (and we have already taken it), that the Son never was equal to God, in *such a sense* as is inconsistent with the fact, *that His Father alone is the only true God.*

Much more, Sir, might be said, and, perhaps, it may seem, ought to be said, under this head of discourse; but the limits I propose to myself do not permit me to proceed; and if what I have already remarked, upon a few of the passages which you produced, be just, and invalidate your construction of them, a further examination, and in detal, becomes unnecessary.

Q. P. O.

[Remainder in the next number.]

Scripture Truth sufficiently Obvious.

Strange as it may seem, it is in religion more than in any thing else, that mankind are prone to lose sight of what is most obvious and important, and to labour after what is more remote and subtile, and more doubtful both in respect to its truth and utility. Thus it was that the Israelites were not satisfied with the plain instructions of Moses, but were ready to ask who shall go up to heaven, or beyond the sea, to bring them true and infallible instructions. And St. Paul, in the same spirit, indicates, that there were those among his brethren, who would bring Christ down again from heaven, or, as if setting aside his resurrection, call him from the depths below, to impart God's word anew. And what sort of character does he ascribe to these persons? They have a Godly zeal, he says, but not according to knowledge; and not considering the righteousness of God, that righteousness which God requires, they seek to establish a righteousness of their own. And what direction does the Apostle give? "If thou confess with thy mouth that Jesus is the *Lord*, and be-

lieve in thy heart (heartily and sincerely believe) that God raised him from the dead, thou wilt be saved." This is the simple creed prescribed by Paul; the same apostle whose epistles contain some things, as Peter, his fellow-apostle says, which are hard to be understood. And it is these obscure passages, of doubtful or local interpretation, that have given occasion to those, who are not content with the plain instructions of Christ and his apostles, to erect a system of mysterious and metaphysical theology, that has at times distracted the whole Christian world, and well nigh effaced the benign character of the gospel of peace. No sooner did the ministry of Christ commence, than some,—not looking or caring for the inspiration and sovereignty of divine truth, for a kingdom that began and which was to be established without observation, without external show,—openly manifested their disappointment; while others designedly misinterpreted what was plain, and put a forced meaning upon the Saviour's declarations, which could originate only from perverseness. And St. Paul, besides noticing the faults and corruptions of his own countrymen, warns his converts against *philosophizing* Christians; and reproves their divisions into sects; and their ranging themselves under the banners of distinguished leaders. If there were just occasion for the Apostle's reproofs of this kind, we are not to expect that future converts would turn all at once to the simplicity that is in Christ. As the Jews were slow to reject even their burdensome ritual, and to throw off the load of traditionary absurdities, so the learned Gentile converts could not lay aside altogether the dreams of their mythology, and their philosophical refinements. The natural causes which were at work, even under the teaching of Christ and his Apostles, who were clothed with miraculous powers, continued to operate afterwards; and while the heathen converts mingled their prejudices and tenets with the new religion,—they, no less than the Jews, were ashamed to be the disciples of a crucified Saviour. "Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness." And they were ready to adopt any mystical doctrine that would free them from the reproach of allegiance to a crucified Lord. The early history of the church, affords ample illustrations of the truth of the above remarks—of the want of satisfaction which was felt in the plain instructions of our Saviour, and of the disposition to pry into the heavens above, and the depths below, for what it had not pleased the God of truth to reveal. Hence the early

fathers of the Christian church were lost in endless mazes, while searching into the mysteries of the Divine essence, and endeavouring to become wise beyond what is written, by uniting philosophy with revelation. And four centuries after Christ, during which time, it might be supposed that what was revealed in God's word might have been ascertained with as much certainty as God in his wisdom intended it should be, St. Augustine, in his Confessions, affirmed that he had no conception of the incarnation in the person of Christ, till he read the books of Plato; and that he was afterwards confirmed in his opinion by reading the Scriptures. A strange confession, and one which in these days would go pretty far to destroy one's authority in matters of faith; yet St. Augustine was as great an oracle with popes and councils, as Calvin has ever been with Protestant churches and synods. I need not travel into the dark ages, or come down to times succeeding the reformation, to illustrate my subject; for I believe it will be granted, that in regard to religious truth, mankind are exceedingly prone to lose sight of the greater good, and to go in quest of what is remote; of what, if not unattainable, is of no practical worth.

If this be so, it is highly important to inquire, how we are to guard against this prevailing tendency? It is to be guarded against, I believe, only by the independent use of our own understanding. To some persons, this may at first appear to be a startling proposition. Much pains has been taken to prostrate the understanding—that celestial gift—that gift of God's own inspiration—before the altar of a blind, implicit faith. No efforts have been spared by ambitious men to limit the exercise of reason upon speculative dogmas, and to substitute authority in its place. For with all our boasting of the doctrines of the Reformation, this tyranny over the mind is a fragment of papacy—still tenaciously preserved. And no wonder that solemn warnings against inquiry into doctrines long handed down, with all the array of terrific consequences annexed to the opposite views, should have their influence on weak and timid minds. It is only by escaping from this thraldom, that we can acquire that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. This liberty does not allow us to surrender our judgment to the church papal, or the church reformed, but only to the word of God and the kingdom that he hath established. Is human authority of no value then? It is certainly of no value, till it is shown in some way that it is entitled to respect. We all have but one opinion of pa-

pal authority, which has had for ages, and still has the most wide-spread dominion in regard to Christian doctrines and usages. And can we believe that the authority of the major part of the Protestant church, merely because it is the major part, possesses an infallibility which we deny to that of the Papal? I would speak with due reverence of the reformers and of the Reformation. Whatever errors they failed to correct, and whatever errors they introduced, they secured to us that glorious inheritance, that birthright of every Christian, the right of private judgment. And this it is our solemn duty to cherish. I know not why the same sort of reasoning should not apply to all Protestant churches, and councils, and synods, and assemblies, whose purpose it is to establish certain dogmas and usages, which we admit to be valid in regard to the Papal. To say nothing of their right to interference in these matters, there are other questions of no small importance. Were the persons concerned so circumstanced as to be peculiarly secure against error? Did they meet to deliberate calmly in order to settle some great and manifest truths of Christianity, or, on the contrary, to combat some supposed heresy? Were they remarkable for Christian humility, or distinguished for arrogance and presumption? Were their enactments made in a peaceful state of the church, or when it was rent by factions? If these questions are not settled in their favour, their decrees are entitled to no respect; and if they are settled in their favour, they are entitled to no more respect than the evidence upon which those decrees are founded. These questions being fairly disposed of, the thinking, independent mind will be little affected by such extraneous authority.

Another and probably the greatest enemy to the independent exercise of the understanding in coming to the knowledge of obvious truth, is fear. I am far from thinking that fear is to be banished, as a motive of action and conduct. The fear of *doing wrong*, fear proceeding from a guilty conscience, and the consequent fear of God's displeasure, no good man would wish to destroy. But fear, as it affects one's opinions, may be the most powerful adversary of truth. What I mean by fear, therefore, is something very different from caution, or a sense of responsibility—it is the opposite of presumption; and as presumption arises from undue confidence and boldness, so fear proceeds from undue self-distrust and timidity. Now is it possible that such fear can be favourable to the understanding and judgment in forming and maintaining our opinions? May

it not, on the contrary, betray us? May it not lead us to give a reluctant assent to tenets and notions, which, if they do not corrupt our purity, may essentially affect our tranquillity and happiness. But are not,—I make the appeal with reluctance,—are not the fears of mankind too often addressed, in the popular expositions and discourses of some of the interpreters of God's word, in order to secure their profession and belief of certain opinions? Are not these fears roused by exaggerated descriptions of human nature (that nature which the God of all purity has seen fit to give us), and by vague descriptions of the conversion of this nature, which have their origin too much in the imagination and passions? I might add also many subtle points, concerning the nature of Christ, and the mode in which we are saved by his merits. Now if it be true, as I believe it is, that such appeals to the fears of mankind are quite as frequent and earnest on the part of some of the expounders of God's word, as to their fears from guilt which is voluntarily contracted, let me ask if this course is founded in the word of God? It is one thing to explain what we think is found in the Scriptures, and quite another to array a different belief with a host of terrors and frightful images. And if Christ is any model for preaching, it seems to me that they who pursue the course I have described, have strangely mistaken their duty.

The only instance I find, in Christ's preaching, where there is any colour for supposing a denunciation of punishment for want of belief in his doctrine, is that in which one of the evangelists gives an account of the commission which Jesus gave to the eleven apostles, after his resurrection, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel. He who believeth it and is baptized will be saved; but he who believeth not will be damned or [condemned]." What belief is meant? Belief in the gospel as a divine dispensation. And what is the condemnation for unbelief? I do not know. But it seems to me to be intended, that if those to whom this gospel is offered, continue obdurate, and cherish their sins, they are exposed to greater punishment, than those are to whom these good tidings are not announced. But punishment of sins, which have a well-known name and character, such as cruelty, hypocrisy, blasphemy, evil speaking, and disgraceful crimes, are threatened in the strongest terms. Now how different is this from that preaching of the word which would make our salvation depend upon certain formulas of doctrine, deduced from single insulated passages of Scripture which have been

disputed about from the beginning of the christian dispensation to this time, and can never be settled without a new light from heaven.

Infidelity.

The following extract from a Sermon of the Rev. Robert Aspland, London, has been sent to us by a respected correspondent who remarks :—"If you should take the same view of the paragraph as I do, it cannot fail to strengthen your hands in the good work in which you are engaged. I think, also, that it will be very acceptable to your readers."

"Some persons are alarmed, more affect to be alarmed, at the progress of what is called infidelity. For one, I am free to avow, that though I hold no conviction of my understanding more certain than the truth, and no sentiment of my heart dearer than the excellence of Christianity, I am, notwithstanding, quite satisfied with the state of the public mind. A great process has been carrying on, and we are now nearly arrived at the crisis. Those of us who are no longer young may hope to see the result. Judging from the signs of the times, I cannot doubt that the issue will be in favour of the rational gospel. Unbelievers have done unspeakable good in exposing and making men ashamed of the corruptions of Christianity. Without meaning or knowing it, they have been instruments in the hands of Providence for purifying and saving true religion. Such of them as are of pure mind and benevolent feelings (and that there are such amongst them it were gross bigotry to deny), have served the interests of real piety, although they may have carried their offerings to the Unknown God. They have opposed the Christian faith merely because they gave ear to the popular voice, and took for Christian, doctrines which are derogatory to the Divine character, revolting to the human understanding, and at war with the peace of the world, and the improvement of social institutions. Let them learn what the gospel is, a scheme for glorifying the Parent Creator by making the creature man happy, and great in his virtuous happiness, and they will be prompt to embrace it, and the first to lay themselves out for its promotion. They may not enrol themselves of

any one church or sect; they may subscribe and assent to no given creed; they may be unable to define their faith or sentiments in words; but as far as they love goodness and aspire to intellectual and moral greatness, they are the disciples of Christ. This discipleship they will sooner or later be eager to avow; for everything in nature, everything in Providence, everything in the human mind and everything in the human heart, as it comes from the hand of its Maker, tends towards what is just in principle and benevolent in feeling; that is, tends towards Jesus Christ, in whom are fulfilled the highest thoughts of the wise and the best wishes of the good."

The Christian Denomination.

I HAVE been looking for sometime past with great interest to the sect called *Christians*, and I doubt not that every Unitarian, who earnestly wishes the success of the unadulterated gospel, will sympathize with me in this regard. They acknowledge no creeds. They recognise the Scriptures, and the Scriptures only, as the standard of faith and duty. They exclude from their fellowship no one who sincerely professes to be a disciple of Jesus, whatever may be his opinion on debateable points. They are universally agreed likewise in the great, fundamental doctrines of Christianity, that the Father alone is God and that Jesus Christ is his Son. For these truths they are contending earnestly and with increasing success. Their number is augmenting to such an extent, that in some quarters it is an object of alarm. We are told by the "Palladium," that there are two hundred ministers of their connection in the State of New York, "and near one thousand in America. Their churches are comparatively few in New-England, though some of them (the one for instance, at New Bedford*) are large and flourishing. Their greatest strength is in the interior of New York and at the West. On a large mass of society their preachers already exert a strong influence in the sphere in which they act; they are doing for the cause of truth what no other men under the existing cir-

* This society has recently erected with great ease a large and handsome church at an expense of twenty-two thousand dollars. The number of communicants recently added, under very favourable circumstances, is nearly one hundred.

cumstances could accomplish. Acquainted, as they are, with the manners, characters, and wants of those among whom they move, they are better fitted to advance the cause of liberal Christianity in the West, than preachers educated at a divinity college, who must necessarily be supposed to want that kind of knowledge and tact, which can be gained only by long experience, and to be more sensitive to obstacles of a peculiar kind, which the former either disregard or do not feel. In Unitarian societies already organized at the West, or among certain classes, preachers from New England can work with effect. But in the great and noble work which as pioneers they have undertaken with so much zeal and resolution, the Christians are better. They open the way and sow the seed broadcast. And it is to be believed, that the fruit of what they thus sow in their own circle of labour may be wafted by some auspicious breeze to circles beyond. Besides the influence which their preachers exert in their ordinary ministrations and their public controversies, something is to be attributed to their periodicals, which are extensively circulated, and to other tracts. Already it is to be supposed, they have done much towards enlightening the public mind within the sphere of their influence; and by aiming at the right points of inquiry. Such being the case, we, who are professedly anxious for the progress of the truth, cannot but feel that they have strong claims on our sympathy and assistance; and in whatever direction a call may be made by our brethren, I hope it will be met with a generous alacrity. In its character and tendencies their denomination must be regarded as one of the first importance to the cause of truth.

I am glad to perceive that they are beginning to look to a more educated ministry.

NOTICES OF BOOKS.

Prayers for Children and young Persons. Compiled by a Teacher, for the use of Sabbath Schools, and Families. Second Edition. John W. Foster. Portsmouth. 1834. pp. 43. 12mo.

This is a beautiful little work, and well adapted to those for whom it was prepared. It comes from the right quarter, from

the practical teacher of Christianity to the young. He is evidently intimate with the wants of the juvenile heart, and understands how to lead it in its communion with its Heavenly Father. The prayers are accordingly simple, earnest, confiding; such indeed as all prayers ought to be, whether breathed from the lips of the old or young. They are encumbered with no mysterious, unintelligible terms or sentences,as stumbling-blocks in the child's walk with God. Both the language and sentiments are entirely appropriate. We mention these things the rather, because it has been, and is now, too often the case, that the young mind is mystified, and the young heart damped in its early religious feelings by the dark and forbidding aspect which Prayer is made to assume; the child fears to engage in it, and shrinks away from the most delightful and elevated of exercises as from the entrance to a tomb. This most unhappy and injurious result the present compilation is well calculated to avert. "Our Father who art in Heaven," is not used as an unmeaning phrase. Those who use this book aright and imbibe its spirit, will feel when they pray, that God is truly their Father, and that to commune with him is one of the most blessed privileges as well as solemn duties that the young can enjoy.

These prayers were designed in part for Sunday schools, and we hope most sincerely that they will be extensively used in those institutions. Sunday-school instruction will avail but little, if the pupils are not taught how to pray, and induced to form fixed devotional habits. The soil of the mind may be rich, and the seed of the teacher be well sown, but no "increase" can be looked for unless the daily fertilizing influences of sun and rain and dew, the divine influences of prayer, descend upon the soul and soften and warm it.

We subjoin a prayer for Sunday morning.

"Most holy and eternal God, the Lord and Sovereign of all! I humbly present to thee, on this sacred morning, my soul and body, to be disposed of by thee for thy glory, to be blessed by thy providence, to be guided by thy counsel, and to be sanctified by thy spirit.

"This day, O Lord, and all the days of my life, I dedicate to thee. Take from me all slothfulness, and give me a diligent and an active spirit. Teach me to watch over all my ways, that I may not be overcome by sudden temptations. Be thou my guide in all my actions; my protector in all dangers. Give me a healthful body, and a clear understanding. Make me just and charitable; religious and humble; cheerful and contented. Pardon all my sins; and fix my thoughts, my hopes, and desires upon heaven. Make me to love thee, my God, and Jesus Christ, thy Son, whom thou hast sent for my redemption. Teach me to obey all thy commands; and at last, make me a partaker in all thy promises.

"Assist me in the duties of this day. In thy house may I be devout and humble. In my retirement, may I examine myself, and repent of my sins. May I learn more of thee, and be better prepared to serve thee here, and to meet thee at last in heaven. Grant this, O God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Amen." L.

CORRESPONDENCE AND INTELLIGENCE.

FOURTH LETTER TO THE REV. ADIN BALLOU.

Harvard, Sept. 1st, 1834.

DEAR SIR,

IN my last letter I gave you what I thought was the meaning of the three passages of Scripture, which you quote as involving the doctrine of universal restoration. Neither these passages, nor the many other passages, which are frequently adduced as proofs of your doctrine, have seemed to me to teach the doctrine. And while I find no plain declaration that all will be finally restored to holiness and happiness, I find many passages which seem to teach the opposite doctrine. If a final restoration be the true doctrine, so important to be known, for the vindication of the character of God, and for the moral welfare of mankind, it has seemed strange to me, that the Bible should so darkly and obscurely teach it, and with such apparent plainness teach a contrary doctrine. Believing this to be the fact, I have doubted the propriety of drawing an inference from the fundamental truths of revelation, which appears to contradict the instructions of that revelation. We cannot tell exactly what God must do, and what he must not do in order to sustain the character of a holy, wise, and benevolent being. We can say he will do no wrong, and that he will certainly do right; but many things may be perfectly consistent with the divine rectitude, which to us may seem contrary to it. We have so many evidences of his power, wisdom, and goodness, that we firmly believe that he is powerful, wise, and good, though there are many things, in which his wisdom and goodness are not apparent to us. Knowing that God was infinite in power, wisdom and goodness, should we beforehand have supposed that he would create such a world as this? a world that has always been so full of ignorance, error, sin, and suffering? Why should a benevolent being, so wise and mighty, form such a creature as man? Why should he give him such a nature? Why should he subject him to such a course of discipline? Why should he cause him to pass through such scenes of temptation, trial, and affliction? Why did not Infinite Benevolence secure to man the same amount of good without the evil? Why might we not have been rendered holy and happy without all this tribulation and sorrow which now fall to our lot? How could a being of such love, tenderness, and compassion give existence to creatures capable of and exposed to so much evil and suffering? Say that all will be finally happy, yet why were such means of happiness appointed in preference to any other? A thousand such questions might be asked, and the wisest answer we can give them is, *we know not.* He has created such a world and such beings, and subjected them to such a course of discipline. We cannot perceive the reasons of all his dealings, nor fathom all his designs. We are but very partially acquainted with that scene of things in which we are placed. A final restoration does not free the doctrine of the divine benevolence from all its difficulties; nor do the views of the ultra-Universalists. For if God is love, why does he permit his offspring to endure any suffering at all, even in this world? Could he not have prevented it? I do not doubt the goodness of God, though there are many things which I cannot explain nor understand.

The manner in which you speak of a future retribution and a restoration, is calculated to leave the impression, that God does not furnish us with sufficient means of holiness in this world, or that he will punish us for

that which we could not avoid. I have supposed that he makes just such conditions of happiness as we can comply with, if we choose—that he requires nothing of us which we are unable to perform. If he does thus, how does it impeach his benevolence, if we abuse his mercy, and render ourselves miserable? Behold that impenitent sinner, loaded with guilt, and just dropping into the grave. Why is he going out of the world, polluted, hardened, and wretched? Has he had no space for repentance? O yes. Year after year has he been continued in this state of probation. But then has he enjoyed any advantages for growing wiser and better? Yes, he has been made acquainted with his condition and duty; he has been favoured with the means of knowledge, wisdom, holiness, and virtue; but he has neglected and abused them. He might have repented long ago. He was told of his danger, and exhorted to flee to the ark of safety; but he remained indifferent and rebellious. Is God malevolent; is God cruel; because he does not wait millions of years for him to do what he might have done in a very little time? It has seemed to me that you do not sufficiently consider the aggravated sinfulness of the sinner: what light and advantages he has abused: what offers of grace he has rejected: what overtures of mercy he has slighted: what intreaties and invitations he has disregarded: what admonitions and warnings he has treated with contempt: what provisions for his return to his Heavenly Father he has neglected. Notwithstanding all that has been done for his pardon and salvation, he continues a stranger and a rebel. He has neither feared the displeasure and judgments of God, nor sought his approbation and love. We ought to bear such things in mind. God's love is not a blind passion, but a holy and reasonable love. His goodness is the goodness of a perfectly moral being. He has placed holiness and happiness within our reach, and if we are miserable, it is our own fault.

The Scriptures seem to me to inculcate the doctrine, that our time of probation is limited to this life. If I could discover your doctrine of a restoration plainly taught in divine revelation, I think I should cordially embrace it. But until I can, I must reject it. Arguing from what we see and know, what probability is there that all those who die impenitent will become holy in a future state? If such a person has continued disobedient and sinful through life, how does it encourage the hope that he will repent and become holy after death? He has abused his mercies here; why may he not hereafter? He has neglected his means of grace in this world; how are we sure that he will not in the world to come? Perhaps you will say that his moral and religious advantages will be increased; but how do you know it? And how do you know but that in the future state his temptations to sin will be proportioned to his motives to virtue exactly as they are in this present state of being?

If our spiritual advantages in another world are to be no greater than they are here, can we be confident that all will duly appreciate and employ them? If in the future world our helps to holiness are to be greater, and our hindrances less, and if the success of these future means is certain, why should so much have been done and suffered to bring men to repentance before death? And if the future is to be a so much better school of reform, and one which will not fail to accomplish its object; would it not be an encouragement to many to undervalue and neglect their present opportunities? It seems to me that such would be its tendency; at least, such often appears to be its result. But the main point to settle, is, whether it be a doctrine of divine revelation; if it be, its tendency must be good, if properly used. A true doctrine may be abused.

I was somewhat surprised to find you expressing yourself in the following language—"As a simple proposition, declared in so many words on every leaf of the Bible, it [the doctrine of a final restoration] would have been worth infinitely less than it now is. *Then*, men would have taken it up with little or no inquiry into the nature of those principles on which it rests. It would have led its believer to none of that investigation, analy-

sis, and profound thought, which it now requires. It would have been taken for granted without reflection, and consequently with little benefit to the soul." My dear Sir, my heart does not respond with approbation to such sentiments. My thoughts and sympathies are with the multitude —with that numerous class of my fellow-beings, to whom such "investigation," "analysis" and "profound thought," must be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible. Do not the ignorant, the weak-minded, the poor, the sick, the afflicted, need religion? Why then should one of its most important doctrines require such a laborious research, and such mental exertions? What you consider an excellency in your doctrine, I should rather regard as a defect. If the doctrine is important to all, it should be intelligible to all. Those of the meanest capacities and in the humbler walks of life need a mild and merciful religion as well as the favoured few. Had the doctrine of universal restoration been plainly inscribed on every leaf of the Bible, I must think, after all you say, that it would have made a deeper impression, and it would have gained a more general belief; and then, you would only have to urge your hearers to reduce their faith to practice. I have considered it one of the excellencies of the Christian religion, that its doctrines and precepts were plain and simple; so plain and simple that the common people could gain such a knowledge of them as was necessary in order to their becoming Christians. When I read the Athanasian Creed, the Assembly's Catechism, Calvin's Institutes, and Hopkins's System, I think of the thousands who must die without religion, if a firm and clear faith in all these dogmas be necessary to render one religious.

We are taught to be holy, perfect, and merciful, as our Heavenly Father is, and you think we are commanded to be more merciful than he is, if he does not render all finally holy and happy; and therefore if your doctrine is not true, you cannot exhibit the Divine character as a model worthy of imitation. But admitting that God does give us an opportunity to do and be in this life all that he requires in order to our acceptance, why is his goodness questioned, because we remain sinful? He can never love sin, till he ceases to be a Holy God. Love and mercy have their bounds and conditions. We cannot esteem others except in proportion to their virtues; nor can God regard us with approbation except in proportion to our conformity to his will. The sinner must make holiness his choice. Why may he not choose to remain unholy in another world as well as in this?

We are required to have the spirit and mind of Christ—to resemble him —to imitate him. And yet he tells us of some to whom he will say, "I know you not! Depart from me!" Those who have been ashamed of him and denied him, he will be ashamed of and deny. The Scriptures certainly seem to encourage the belief, that there will be a time, when the day of grace will be gone, when the gate of mercy will be shut. If it seems a dreadful thought that such a time should ever be, let it excite us to greater watchfulness, and to greater diligence and earnestness in exhorting others to prepare to meet their God—to seek him while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near. That we may successfully strive to enter in at the strait gate, so run that we may obtain, and that we may be wise to win souls, is the prayer of your friend and brother,

JONATHAN FARR.

REV. ADIN BALLOU.